

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

a play for grades K-3

by Elaine Jarvik



PLAN-B
Theatre Company



RIVER. SWAMP. CAVE. MOUNTAIN by Elaine Jarvik received its world premiere October 13-November 18, 2017 as Plan-B Theatre Company's Fifth Annual Free Elementary School Tour, funded in part by an ArtWorks grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Directed by Cheryl Cluff, stage managed by Sarah Meservy and designed by Aaron Swenson (costumes and artwork). Featuring Ashley Marian Ramos as Izzy and Benjamin Young as JJ.

Please contact playwright Elaine Jarvik directly for production rights for this or the larger-cast version at jarviolaine@hotmail.com

CHARACTERS

IZZY: Age 8, a talkative know-it-all who doesn't know it all

JJ: Age 5, her brother, who has lots of questions

SETTING

Here and lots of other wondrous and fearsome places

(Lights up on IZZY and JJ, facing us. IZZY is wearing a backpack.)

IZZY: Salutations! That's a fancy word for Hello.

JJ: We're going to sing you a song.

IZZY: These people don't have time for a song.

JJ: Yes they do. (to audience) Raise your hand if you have time for a song? (to IZZY) See?

IZZY: There will be no singing today.

JJ: Why?

IZZY: I hate singing.

JJ: No you don't. You like to sing. You love to sing.

IZZY: No I don't.

JJ: Yes you do.

IZZY: Have you heard me singing lately?

JJ: No.

IZZY: See?

JJ: But why? Why won't you sing?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Because why?

IZZY: ...

JJ: Is it a secret?

IZZY: Look, these people don't have all day.

JJ: Why don't you like to sing anymore?

IZZY: Stop asking so many questions. (to audience) Salutations! My name is Izzy. Izzy is short for Isabel. I was named after my grandmother, which means we have the same name. Grandma Isabel moved into our house when I was two, so that was ... seven years ago, because I'm nine.

JJ: No you're not. You're eight.

IZZY: I'm practically nine.

JJ: You're eight-and-a-half.

IZZY (sighing; to audience): This is my little brother JJ. He's (pointedly) barely five. We also have a little sister named Annie.

JJ: Can I tell my knock-knock joke now?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Knock-knock.

IZZY: Who's there?

JJ: Annie.

IZZY: Annie who?

JJ: Annie-body home?

IZZY (to audience): So, as I was// saying

JJ: Can I tell another knock-knock joke?

IZZY: Our agreement was one joke.

JJ: No it wasn't.

IZZY: Okay. But only one more joke. These people are in a hurry.

JJ: Knock-knock.

IZZY: Who's there?

JJ: Isabel.

IZZY: Isabel who?

JJ: Isabel broken? I'm ringing it and no one answers ... (to audience) Isabel is my grandmother.

IZZY: I already told them that.

JJ: You said Grandma Isabel is your Grandma. You didn't say she's my Grandma.

IZZY: Brothers and sisters always have the same Grandma.

JJ: But I'm Grandma Isabel's favorite.

IZZY: No you're not.

JJ: Am too.

IZZY: Are not.

JJ: She loves me 500 million.

IZZY (to audience): Pffff. This is what I call outlandish, which is a fancy word for making something sound bigger than it really is. Outlandish is one of my favorite fancy words. Some of my other favorites are scallywag, which is a fancy word for someone who makes trouble (a glance at JJ), and humdrum, which is a fancy word for boring. I am never humdrum. I am always spectacular, which is a fancy word for really, really awesome.

JJ: If these people are in a hurry, why are you talking so much?

IZZY (ignoring JJ; to audience): Today I want to tell you about something that happened at our house.

JJ: Our Grandma died.

IZZY: Don't tell them that yet!

JJ: Why?

IZZY: Because we have to tell them how first she got sick. And then she was sick for a long time. And then she died. You have to tell it in order.

JJ: Why?

IZZY: Because. (to audience) And now we're going on a journey.

JJ: Who?

IZZY: Us. You and me. And these people here. They're going to come with us. (to audience) Raise your hand if you want to come with us on our journey.

JJ: But what kind of journey?

IZZY: Mom says that when someone dies you always go on a journey. (to audience) A journey is sort of like a trip but it's more ... (she tries to think of the word)

JJ: Exciting?

IZZY: Yes. But also more ...

JJ: Weird?

IZZY: No! A journey is more ... momentous, which is a fancy word for big and important. That's because when you come back home from a journey you're different from when you left.

JJ: Will I be taller?

IZZY: No.

JJ (clearly disappointed): Oh ... Will I be older?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Hooray!

IZZY(stage whisper to audience): If the journey takes 20 minutes he'll be 20 minutes older.

JJ: What did you just tell them?

IZZY: Nothing. I was 'clearing my throat.' (SHE clears her throat) (to audience) Raise your hand if you're ready to go with us on our journey ... Okay, here we go!

JJ: Wait!! Wait, wait, wait, wait. I never said I want to go on a journey.

IZZY: Don't you want to find the thing at the end of the journey?

JJ: What thing?

IZZY: Mom said that when you go on a journey you always find something magical at the end.

JJ: A treasure?

IZZY: Yes. A treasure. She said Grandma left us a treasure.

JJ: A treasure chest full of gold coins?

IZZY: I don't know. She just said 'a treasure.'

JJ: Will I get to wear a pirate hat?

IZZY: Yes.

(SHE opens her backpack and takes out two pirate hats and two cardboard insides of paper towel rolls.)

IZZY: Here you go. One hat. And one telescope. I also have a flashlight for later, for exploring secret caves.

JJ: There's going to be a secret cave?

IZZY: Probably. Sometimes treasures are buried in secret caves.

(THEY put on their hats.)

IZZY: Let's go!

(SHE begins marching, pulling JJ along with her. THEY march and look through their telescopes.)

IZZY: (rhythmically) We're going on a journey, with a telescope and light

We're going on a journey, but we won't stay overnight

We'll be back before you know it, in 30 minutes or less,

Because we know that you have things to do, like reading

JJ: And recess!

IZZY: We're going on a journey, and we don't know what's in store

We're going on a journey, to places we'll explore.

And who knows where we'll end up, or whether there'll be bears

Or lions or monsters, so I'm warning you: Beware!

JJ: Did you say bears?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: And lions?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: And monsters?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: I want to go home.

IZZY: We can't turn back now!

JJ: Why not?

IZZY: Because we just crossed a bridge.

JJ: We did?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: So let's cross back over the bridge and go home.

IZZY: Heroes never go back before the journey is over.

JJ: We're heroes?

IZZY: Yes. We're the heroes of this journey.

JJ: But I don't want to find any bears.

IZZY: I said maybe there will be bears. And maybe not.

JJ: Can we sing a song?

IZZY: No.

JJ: I feel braver when I'm singing. We could sing a hero song.

IZZY: No.

JJ: Why not?

IZZY: I already told you: No songs today. Just keep marching.

JJ: Are we superheroes or just plain old heroes?

IZZY: Superheroes.

JJ: I knew it! ... Can I wear a superhero cape?

IZZY: Yes.

SHE opens her backpack and pulls out superhero capes for both of them.

IZZY: And now we're off to find the treasure!

(SHE pulls JJ along; they march and look through their telescopes.)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes?

JJ: Are we looking for Grandma?

IZZY: No.

JJ: But maybe she's in trouble. Maybe a bear is going to get her. Maybe that's why we're superheroes—to save Grandma from a bear.

IZZY: A bear isn't going to get her.

JJ: Because there're no bears here?

IZZY: Because Grandma died. There was a funeral. Remember?

JJ: Yes, but now we might need to save her from a bear. We might need to find her and save her.

IZZY: We can't save her if she already died.

JJ: Why not?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Maybe we should call her. Just to make sure.

IZZY: We can't do that.

JJ: I brought the phone!

IZZY: Grandma can't talk to us on the phone. When you're dead you can't talk anymore. You can't do anything.

JJ: Are you sure?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: But then how will she make me a piñata for my birthday party?

IZZY: She won't.

(Suddenly JJ runs away.)

IZZY: Where are you going? The journey is this way.

JJ: I'm going back to when Grandma wasn't dead.

IZZY: We can't do that.

JJ: Yes we can.

IZZY: It doesn't work that way.

JJ: You're a big meanie.

IZZY: Look! Over there!

JJ: Where?

IZZY: Look through your telescope. There's a boat. Hurry!

(SHE pulls JJ toward the boat)

IZZY: (rhythmically) We're going on a journey by land and bridge and water

And we're going to do everything that superheroes oughta.

We're going on a journey to a far and distant shore

So it's good we have a telescope—that turns into an oar!

JJ: Wait!

IZZY: Quick! Get in before the boat floats away.

(THEY climb into the boat.)

IZZY: Start paddling!

(THEY both begin paddling furiously. And continue paddling during the following.)

JJ: Where are we?

IZZY: I don't know. But there's a lot of water.

JJ: Is it a river?

IZZY: I don't know. Just paddle vigorously! (to audience) Vigorously is a fancy word for when you do something with lots of energy.

JJ: I'm glad Grandma taught me how to swim. Did she teach you how to swim?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: I was afraid to put my face in the water. But Grandma made it into a game.

IZZY: And Grandma taught me how to ride a bike.

JJ: Why didn't she teach me to ride a bike?

IZZY: Because you're only 5.

JJ: That's not fair.

IZZY: The first time I rode my bike all by myself without wobbling, Grandma whooped and hollered so loud that the Rodriguezes came running out of their house because they thought something was wrong.

JJ: Grandma was loud sometimes. I liked how loud she was ... I miss Grandma.

(JJ begins to cry. HE looks over the side of the boat.)

JJ: My tear just fell into the river.

IZZY: Keep paddling.

JJ: Maybe it's a river of tears.

IZZY: Well I doubt that.

JJ: Maybe it's a river of all the tears of all the people whose grandmothers have died.

IZZY: That would be a lot of tears. Lots of grandmothers have died.

JJ: How many?

IZZY: I don't know the exact number.

JJ: But who? Whose grandmother has died?

IZZY: ... Lucy's grandmother.

JJ: That's only one grandmother.

IZZY: ... Mom and Dad's grandmothers.

JJ: Mom and Dad had grandmothers?

IZZY: Everybody has grandmothers. Even the grandmothers had grandmothers. And those grandmothers had grandmothers. And those grandmothers had grandmothers. All the way back to ... the beginning of grandmothers.

JJ: Grandma told me about the longest river in the world.

IZZY: The Nile.

JJ: She told you too?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: I think this might be the Nile. And if we keep paddling we'll get to Egypt, which is a country in Africa.

IZZY: We can't paddle to Egypt. Egypt is all the way across the ocean. We can't paddle across the ocean.

JJ: Grandma told me she wished she could go to Egypt ... Maybe that's where she is! Maybe she's in Egypt!

IZZY: Grandma is not in Egypt. Grandma died.

JJ: I wish we could paddle to Egypt and Grandma would be there.

IZZY: Well we can't.

(beat)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes?

JJ: Are tears the same as water?

IZZY: No. Tears taste like salt. Water tastes like ... water.

JJ: The ocean tastes like salt. Is the ocean made of tears?

IZZY: You ask too many questions.

JJ: (beat) Izzy?

IZZY: Yes?

JJ: Can I ask one more question?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Does water make things grow?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Do tears make things grow?

IZZY: That was two questions.

JJ: But are tears good for something?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: What?

IZZY: That was four questions. If you ask too many questions we'll be here all day and never find the treasure.

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Are you going to ask another question?

JJ: I'm tired of being in this boat.

IZZY: Then let's get out!

(THEY jump out of the boat.)

JJ: Yay! We're on land again!

(JJ begins twirling with happiness. IZZY twirls too. THEY twirl and giggle and shout for joy. Like all kids who are grieving, they don't stay sad. And they don't stay happy either. It's a jumble of changing of emotions that sometimes confuses the grown-ups around them.)

JJ: Let's sing a happy song!

IZZY: No.

JJ: But I'm happy! I like to sing when I'm happy.

(THEY twirl some more.)

JJ: Why can't we sing?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Because of Grandma?

IZZY: Stop asking so many questions.

(Because they are sometimes happy and sometimes sad, IZZY and JJ are now suddenly sad again. THEY collapse onto the ground.)

JJ: I miss Grandma.

IZZY: Me too.

JJ: Is it okay to feel sad?

IZZY: Yes. A big, sad thing happened to us, so we can feel big, sad feelings.

(THEY're sad together. Then IZZY jumps up, pulling JJ up too.)

IZZY: Come on, we need to find Grandma's treasure!

(Rhythmically) We're going on a journey, so grab your telescope.

We don't know what will happen, although I really hope

It's nothing very icky or sickening or gross

Like a monster who's ugly and smelly and verbose.

Verbose is a fancy word for talkative, which is a fancy word for saying more words than you need to.

JJ: Like you?

IZZY: Keep walking.

JJ: Did you say we're going to see a 'monster?'

IZZY: I said I hope not.

JJ: Can we sing a song that keeps scary monsters away?

IZZY: Nope.

JJ: Where do you think we are?

IZZY: Just keep walking.

(THEY walk some more. Eventually it's clear that they have walked into something sticky and clingy. Mossy. Dark. Lots of twisted vines underneath and overhead. They can hardly lift their feet.)

JJ: Izzy, what's happening? Where did all these creepy vines come from?

IZZY: I don't know.

JJ: I can't lift my feet.

IZZY: There's something sticking to my shoes.

JJ: Ew! It's sticking to my arms!

(THEY pull at whatever it is that's sticking to them, but they can't get it off.)

JJ: I can't get the sticky stuff off.

IZZY: I hate this!

JJ: Where are we?

IZZY: A stupid swamp.

JJ: This is your fault!

IZZY: No it's not!

JJ: I never wanted to come on this stupid journey. I hate you!

IZZY: I hate you more!

JJ: I hate everything!

IZZY: I hate everything more than you hate everything.

JJ: I want to kick a door!

IZZY: I want to kick two doors!

JJ: I want to kick a door more than you want to kick a door!

IZZY: No you don't!

JJ: Yes I do! Because Grandma won't be here to make a piñata for my birthday party!

IZZY: Nobody at school knows how much I miss Grandma, and that makes me really angry!

JJ: Grandma taught you how to ride a bike and she won't teach me because she's dead and dead people can't teach people how to ride a bike and that's not fair!

IZZY: Auggghh!

JJ: Augggghhhhh!

(This is the place of powerful feelings, sometimes feelings with no words, a swamp-like place where their bodies express their anger and hurt. IZZY and JJ thrash and twist, stuck in the mud but moving wildly. They're angry and they don't know why. This can be almost like a dance. A stomping, angry, stuck-in-the-mud dance. IZZY pulls a metal water bottle and a stick from her backpack and beats on it; JJ holds his ears and then grabs the metal and the stick from her and beats even louder.)

IZZY: STOP! We need to get out of here!

JJ: How?

IZZY: I don't know! Augghhhhh.

JJ: I wish Grandma was here. She'd know what to do.

IZZY: Well she's not!

(JJ thinks this over. Then HE takes a deep breath and counts to ten on HIS fingers.)

IZZY: What are you doing?

JJ: I'm taking a deep breath and counting to 10. Like Grandma always told us to do when we feel all fussed up.

(Then HE takes another deep breath and counts to ten on HIS fingers.)

JJ: Look!

(HE's able to walk more easily now.)

(IZZY takes a deep breath and counts to ten. IZZY and JJ breathe and count and walk. Eventually there are fewer and fewer vines and fewer sticky places.)

JJ: Do you still have sticky things on you?

IZZY: No.

JJ: Me either!

(THEY give each other high fives.)

JJ: It was scary in there. Were you scared?

IZZY: No.

JJ: You looked like you were scared.

IZZY: Keep walking.

JJ: My feelings were so big in there. It scared me how big they were.

IZZY: A fancy word for big is humungous.

JJ: Is it okay to have feelings that are big?

IZZY: Grandma said it is. She said all feelings are okay to have.

JJ: Even if I want to kick a door?

IZZY: Yes. But you shouldn't actually kick a door.

JJ: What if I want to punch someone?

IZZY: Then you should punch a pillow.

JJ: What if I don't have a pillow?

IZZY: Then take a deep breath and count to ten, and when you get home, punch a pillow.

JJ: And can I throw ice cubes on the driveway and smash them into tiny bits?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Let's go home and do that!

IZZY: But we haven't found the treasure yet.

(SHE pulls JJ along.)

IZZY: (rhythmically) We're going on a journey with a flashlight that we've packed.

We're going on a journey, so there is no turning back

Even though there's something dark ahead, something really dreary

And dreary is a fancy word for gloomy, bleak and teary.

JJ: I don't want to go someplace like that!

IZZY: Heroes always go to places like that. That's how you know they're heroes. Look through your telescope and see if there's something up ahead that's dark and dreary, gloomy, bleak and teary ... Go on.

JJ (looking through his telescope): I can't tell.

IZZY: Go closer.

JJ: Me?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Why can't you go?

IZZY: Because I have to stay here and be in charge.

JJ: In charge of what?

IZZY: Everything ... It's a really hard job.

(beat)

IZZY: Go on.

(JJ moves upstage. IZZY continues to face the audience.)

IZZY: Do you see anything?

JJ: Yes.

IZZY: What is it?

JJ: Just a minute. I have to get closer.

(HE inches toward IZZY.)

IZZY: What do you see?

JJ: It's really creepy.

IZZY: It is? What is it?

JJ: I have to get closer.

IZZY: Okay.

JJ: It's a ...

IZZY: A what?

JJ (reaching out to touch IZZY): It's an Izzy!

IZZY (startled): Aughh!

JJ: Did I scare you?

IZZY: JJ! You shouldn't sneak up on people like that.

JJ (to audience): I scared her!

IZZY (to audience): No he didn't. I never get scared. (to JJ) Go look for the dark and dreary place.

JJ: Only if you'll come with me.

(HE pulls IZZY with him. THEY peer through their telescopes and gingerly move upstage.)

JJ: Look.

IZZY: What.

JJ: I think it's a cave. Maybe it's the secret cave with the buried treasure.

IZZY: Go inside it.

JJ: You go.

IZZY (reaching into her backpack and pulling out the flashlight and quickly handing it to him): You're the one with the flashlight.

(HE tries to give the flashlight back.)

IZZY: Be brave, JJ.

(JJ hesitates and then crouches and enters the cave. Once inside, he stands up and shines the flashlight around to see what's there.)

IZZY (still outside): What do you see?

JJ: Come in with me ... Please?

(IZZY takes a deep breath and enters the cave.)

JJ: It's dark and creepy.

IZZY: And dreary.

JJ: I'm feeling teary. Let's get out of here.

IZZY: Okay. (SHE starts to exit) No, wait. The treasure might be here.

JJ: I'm scared.

(HE shivers. IZZY shivers. THEY sit on a rock (that may look like a bench) and hold hands and shiver together. Finally:)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: One time Grandma told me to stop playing my video game and I called her a Big Meanie. And I did something really, really, really bad.

IZZY: What.

JJ: I stuck my tongue out at her ... Is that why she died?

IZZY: No. You can't kill someone by sticking out your tongue at them or calling them names. You can hurt their feelings, but you can't kill them.

JJ: Are you sure?

IZZY: Yes.

(beat)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes?

JJ: Why do people die?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Because why?

IZZY: Because they get sick. Or in an accident. Or get really, really, really old. Mom said that everything that lives eventually dies. Eventually is a fancy word for after a long time.

JJ: Everything dies?

IZZY: Yes. Flowers bloom and are pretty and eventually they fade and wilt and die. Bugs are born and live and eventually they die. Animals and plants are born and eventually they die — and in between is called ‘being alive.’

JJ: But will you die?

IZZY: Not for a long, long, long time.

JJ: Good.

IZZY: People live a lot, lot, lot longer than flowers or bugs.

(beat)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes?

JJ: Sometimes at home I’m afraid of the dark now. Are you afraid of the dark?

IZZY: No.

JJ: Then why did you ask Mom and Dad to buy you another nightlight when you already had a nightlight? Why do you have two nightlights on at the same time?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Because why?

IZZY: Because I think nightlights are pretty.

JJ: Oh. (beat) But are you sometimes scared?

IZZY: ... (a small voice) Yes.

(beat)

JJ: Izzy?

IZZY: Yes.

JJ: Will you sing me a don’t-be-scared song? Like Grandma used to do?

IZZY: No.

JJ: Please.

IZZY: The rule is 'no songs.' How many times do I have to tell you?

JJ: But why?

IZZY: I told you. I don't like singing.

JJ: Yes you do. You used to sing with Grandma all the time. You sang duets. Which you said was a fancy word for when two people sing a song together.

IZZY: If I can't sing with Grandma, I'm not going to sing at all.

JJ: But singing makes you happy.

IZZY: Not anymore.

JJ: How do you know, if you won't sing?

IZZY: Because.

JJ: Just try. Just sing one song.

IZZY: No.

JJ: Just sing one word.

IZZY: No.

JJ: Just say a word then ... And add a hum.

IZZY: That's dumb.

JJ: Come on, Izzy. Just say one little word and ... add a little tune.

IZZY: No.

JJ: A little tune like a red balloon that lifts and drifts to the top of the room.

IZZY: No.

JJ: When I sing I feel like Grandma's right here with me.

IZZY: Grandma's not here.

JJ: But it feels like she is. Singing makes me feel like she's here. And that makes me happy.

IZZY: Well it doesn't make me happy.

JJ: How do you know if you won't try?

IZZY: ...

JJ: Come on, Izzy.

JJ (singing/rapping): Word, word

Now add a tune

A little hum like a red balloon

That lifts and drifts to the top of the room

And now you're singing with a word and a tune.

JJ: Try it.

IZZY: ...

JJ (singing/rapping): Word, word [what],

A lullaby [bye, bye, bye, bye]

A little hum, like a dragonfly

That rhymes and climbs to the top of the sky

And now you're singing

With a word and a lullaby [shhh, shhh, shhh, shhh]

(Now IZZY is smiling, in spite of herself.)

JJ: Word, word

IZZY: [What?]

JJ: Now add a tune

IZZY: [Uh-huh]

JJ: A little hum, like a red balloon

JJ and IZZY: That lifts and drifts to the top of the room

And now you're singing with a word and a tune.

Word word [what]

A lullaby [bye, bye, bye, bye]

A little hum, like a dragonfly

That rhymes and climbs to the top of the sky

And now you're singing with a word and a lullaby [shhh, shhh, shhh, shhh]

JJ: How do you feel?

IZZY: I feel ...

JJ: Humdrum?

IZZY: No.

JJ: Humungous?

IZZY: Maybe.

JJ: Happy?

IZZY (a realization): ...Yes! Let's get out of this dark and dreary cave!

JJ: Yay!

IZZY: Help me carry this.

(THEY carry the rock out of the cave.)

IZZY: Now we need to climb a mountain!

JJ: We do?

IZZY: Yes. Heroes always climb to the top of a mountain.

JJ: Where's the mountain?

IZZY: Here!

(SHE climbs up on the mountain, which looks like a bench that was once a boat and a rock. SHE pulls JJ up to top of the mountain too.)

IZZY: Word, word [what]

Now add a tune [uh-huh]

A little hum, like a red balloon

IZZY and JJ: That lifts and drifts to the top of the room (your room)

And now you're singing with a word and a tune.

IZZY: When I sing, I feel like Grandma's with me!

JJ: I told you so.

IZZY: She's not here but it feels like she is! Like she's hugging me.

JJ: Like she's a blanket.

IZZY: Around my shoulders!

JJ (singing): Hum, snap

Now clap and cheer

IZZY (singing): 'Cause Grandma's love is always here

A cozy blanket that keeps her near

IZZY and JJ (singing): And now we're singing hum, snap, clap and cheer

IZZY: Let's go home!

JJ: But what about the treasure chest full of golden coins?

IZZY: I think the treasure was something different.

JJ: It was? What was it?

IZZY: The thing Grandma wanted us to remember: That even though she's gone, her love is still here.

IZZY and JJ (singing): Hum, snap

Now clap and cheer

'Cause Grandma's love is always here [what]

A cozy blanket that keeps her near

And we're singing hum, snap, clap and cheer.

JJ: Now what?

IZZY: We're going home.

JJ: Good, because I'm hungry!

IZZY (to audience): We went on a journey with a backpack and a light

We went on a journey with telescopes, and we might

Have paddled and climbed and argued and roamed.

We went on a journey ... and now we'll go home.

JJ: I'm gonna have a ham sandwich. Or maybe a taco.

IZZY (to audience): Thank you for being our traveling companions. Companions is a fancy word for the kind of friends who come along on a journey and know how to listen when someone is sad.

JJ: And I'm going to have grapes and an apple.

IZZY (to audience): Grief is a fancy word for the feelings you have when you're missing someone who has died. And relief is a fancy word for what it feels like to find someone who will listen. Sometimes, listening is the very best thing you can do when someone is sad.

JJ: And I'm going to have celery sticks with peanut butter on them. And raisins on top of the peanut butter.

IZZY (to audience): Thank you for coming with us.

JJ: And also maybe I'll have pizza.

IZZY: Farewell, dear companions!

Beat. IZZY pokes JJ.

JJ: Farewell!

IZZY: That's a fancy word for goodbye!

END OF PLAY



a world premiere by Elaine Jarvik

Fifth Annual Free Elementary School Tour
created specifically for grades K-3 (running time 35 minutes)
Email Education Coordinator Sharah Merservy at sharah@planbtheatre.org
to bring this FREE assembly to your school this fall!



**National
Endowment
for the Arts**
arts.gov



Last fall, our Free Elementary School Tour brought the issue of body image to life through THE EDIBLE COMPLEX. In 2013 and 2014, differences were celebrated and affirmed through DIFFERENT=AMAZING and RUFF!

Schools across the country are being called upon to create trauma-safe spaces where students with a history of trauma can thrive. Even when no obvious trauma is present in a youth's life, trauma-sensitive environments are more supportive of all students.

This year's Free Elementary School Tour offering, RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN., is an innovative and thoughtful starting point.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. by Elaine Jarvik [running time 35 minutes, including a 5-minute post-show discussion] is the story of five-year-old JJ (who has lots of questions) and eight-year-old Izzy (a know-it-all who doesn't know it all), siblings who have recently lost their grandmother. They embark on a funny and touching hero's journey to try to make sense of loss, grief, death and life.

Researchers Vincent Felitti and Robert Anda discovered just how prevalent childhood traumas are, finding that 50% of their study's participants had experienced at least one childhood trauma, while 25% had experienced multiple traumatic incidents.

Felitti & Anda defined trauma, or adverse childhood experiences (ACES), as one of the following: substance abuse in the home, parental separation or divorce, mental illness (including anxiety and depression) in the home, witnessing domestic violence, suicidal household member, death of a parent or loved one, parental incarceration and abuse or neglect.

Currently, the National Survey of Children's Health reports that nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced at least one type of childhood trauma, which takes a toll on a person's physical well-being. Additionally, a student's troubles in school rise correlationally with every traumatic event they experience. Schools are realizing that they play a vital role in supporting students with traumatic backgrounds.

According to the National Alliance for Grieving Children, 1 in 20 children will experience the death of a parent and 1 in 4 will lose a significant family member.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. explores this timely topic with humor and heart. The characters of JJ and Izzy invite K-3 students along on their hero's journey, one that ultimately leads to greater understanding of their grandmother's death.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. explores resiliency and "sticky" emotions. Your students will discover the power of their own imagination as they travel alongside JJ and Izzy.

As your students explore their own life challenges, whether it be the loss of a pet or family member, they will be able to see themselves reflected in these characters and draw support and strength from their experience with RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 2-3 (before you see the play)

Make a t-chart with "Physical Journey" on one side and "Emotional Journey" on the other. Discuss with students that Izzy and JJ go on an emotional journey, meaning that they are trying to understand and work through all the emotions that we feel when someone we love dies. Encourage students to discuss their own emotional journeys. Then encourage students to think about physical journeys that people go on (hikes, vacations). This could lead to a writing activity where students write about physical and emotional journeys they have taken and what they learned from each.

Have students enter words they will hear in RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN. into their vocabulary journals or word banks: momentous, journey, outlandish, scallywag, humdrum, spectacular, treasure, humungous. Have students create two columns next to each of the words. Use the words in a sentence and have students predict what the definitions might be:

- o Outlandish—The story that she told to her friends was outlandish and no one believed it.
- o Momentous—Jose was looking forward to celebrating the momentous occasion with a big celebration.
- o Humdrum—Alice tried to get through the humdrum of her weekend by entertaining herself with books and imaginary friends.
- o Journey—The family went on a journey through the woods to see what they could find.
- o Spectacular—The fireworks display was spectacular and made me open my mouth in awe.
- o Scallywag—The girl called her brother a scallywag because he was such a troublemaker.
- o Treasure—The leprechaun found a treasure chest of jewels at the end of the rainbow.
- o Humungous—The building was humungous compared to all the other buildings surrounding it.
- o Vigorously—The players competed vigorously and finally won the game.

RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

RIVER SWAMP CAVE MOUNTAIN

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 2-3 (after you see the play)

Have students divide a paper into fourths and draw each of the four parts of Izzy and JJ's journey. Discuss the meaning of metaphor and how Izzy and JJ's journey is a metaphor for what it feels like to do something difficult that we don't completely understand. Have students write about a difficult experience from their own lives and the journey they had to go on to get through it. Be sure they include a description of how the journey changed them—how they were different afterward than they were before.

Discuss: What does your body do when you are feeling upset? What could you do about it? What do you do about it? Izzy and JJ discuss punching a pillow, counting to ten and smashing ice. Discuss options like deep breathing and talking to a trusted adult. Perhaps list the names of trusted adults at school and display this list prominently in the classroom with pictures of the individuals as a resource.

Discuss the concept of courage and that it can change depending on the circumstance. Courage is sometimes depicted in books, plays and movies as doing something big and brave like fighting monsters, but courage can also be just getting through a difficult situation.

Discuss how Izzy and JJ help one another get through the sadness of losing their grandmother.

Discuss whether or not you think this play has a happy ending. Why or why not? How do you know?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES SPECIFICALLY FOR GRADES K-1 (before you see the play)

Read the book "The Way I Feel" by Janan Cain. Discuss the emotions in the book. Help students understand that emotions are part of everyday life and that there are many ways of expressing them.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION/ACTIVITIES SPECIFICALLY FOR GRADES K-1 (after you see the play)

Provide students with instruments such as boomwhackers, tambourines, maracas and drums. Discuss some of the emotions that Izzy and JJ experience in the play: happy, sad, angry, scared. Invite students to use their instruments to "express" the emotion through rhythm and sound. The teacher can debrief with students: How does your body feel when you are feeling one of these emotions? Playing an instrument is one way of seeing and hearing these emotions—what are some other ways? How do these emotions look when they come from you?

Play some classical music that demonstrates a mix of tempos. Many classical music compilations for kids are available through iTunes or Apple Music. Have students move to the music and assume poses that express some of the emotions Izzy and JJ experience in the play. Discuss with students: How can expressing our emotions in this way help us?

Provide students with small mirrors. Have them make facial expressions representing each of the emotions from the play and beyond. They can observe how this expression looks in the mirror and then record this expression on a face-shaped template. The self-portraits for each of the emotions can be assembled into a mini self-portrait book. On each page of the mini-book, invite students to complete this sentence stem: I feel _____. Extension: Students may draw a picture of what they do when they are feeling this emotion.

Discuss: What are all the ways we have expressed our emotions? We have drawn them, we have danced them, and we have made music out of them. There are positive ways to share our emotions and ways that are hurtful to others. When you are feeling angry, what are some hurtful ways to share this emotion? What are some positive ways to share this emotion?

HOW THE PLAY TIES INTO THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S CORE CURRICULUM

Kindergarten social studies-Standard 2, Objective 2

- o Identify school personnel to whom students can go to for help or safety.

Kindergarten Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information and feelings.
- o Identify and express ideas, information and feelings in a variety of ways (*draw, paint, tell stories, play make believe, dance, sing*).
- o Express emotions by selecting and playing a variety of simple rhythm instruments.

1st grade Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information, and feelings.
- o Recognize and express feelings in a variety of ways (*draw, paint, tell stories, dance, sing*).

2nd grade Integrated Core, Standard 1, Objective 3

- o Develop and use skills to communicate ideas, information and feelings.
- o Express personal experiences and imagination through dance, storytelling, music and visual art.

3rd grade Health Curriculum, Standard 2 Objective 2

- o Determine how building relationships with helpful people can be beneficial. (SS)
 - o List and classify helpful people; e. g., within family, neighborhood, community.
 - o Identify the benefits of building relationships with caring adults.



**Sometimes, listening is the
very best thing you can do
when someone is sad.**

PLAN-B
Theatre Company

from RIVER.SWAMP.CAVE.MOUNTAIN.

**Email Sarah Merservy, Education Coordinator
at sarah@planbtheatre.org
to bring this FREE assembly to your school this fall!**

*Source for classroom discussion/activities: Souers, K., & Hall, P. (2016).
Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom Alexandria, WA: ASCD.*

Based in Salt Lake City, The Sharing Place (thesharingplace.org) provides a safe and caring environment for grieving children, teens, and their families to share their feelings while healing themselves.

When a child tells you about the death of a loved one, The Sharing Place uses a technique called reflective listening. It is a simple process of repeating what the child said. An example would be if a child says, "My dad passed away," the person speaking to the child would say "Your dad passed away." By using reflective listening, you are giving the child two messages; one is that they were heard and the other is that it's okay to talk about their person. If you act shocked, scared or awkward it gives the child the message that it's not okay to speak about their person. Reflective listening is a safety net to use when you don't know what else to say.

If the child gives you signs of wanting to talk more, it's okay to follow up your reflective statement with a simple question about their person, like "What was your mom's name?" or "What was your favorite thing to do with your dad?" Another appropriate reaction would be to say "I'm really sorry your grandma died." Avoid using statements that assign feelings to the child or puts your own experiences on the child like "I bet you miss you her." or "My dad died when I was young."



RIVER. SWAMP. CAVE. MOUNTAIN.

a play for grades K-3 | larger cast version

by Elaine Jarvik



CHARACTERS

IZZY, 8, a talkative know-it-all who doesn't know it all

JJ, 5, her brother, who has lots of questions

THE RIVER

THE SWAMP

THE CAVE

THE MOUNTAIN

SETTING

Here and lots of other wondrous and fearsome places

Lights up on IZZY and JJ, facing us. IZZY is wearing a backpack.

IZZY

Salutations! That's a fancy word for Hello.

JJ

We're going to sing you a song!

IZZY

These people don't have time for a song.

JJ

Yes they do. *(to audience)* Raise your hand if you have time for a song? *(to IZZY)* See?

IZZY

There will be no singing today.

JJ

Why?

IZZY

I hate singing.

JJ

No you don't. You *like* to sing. You *love* to sing.

IZZY

No I don't.

JJ

Yes you do.

IZZY

Have you heard me singing lately?

JJ

No.

IZZY

See?

JJ

But why? Why won't you sing?

IZZY

Because.

JJ

Because why?

IZZY

...

JJ

Is it a secret?

IZZY

Look, these people don't have all day.

JJ

Why don't you like to sing anymore?

IZZY

Stop asking so many questions. *(to audience)* Salutations! My name is Izzy. Izzy is short for Isabel. I was "named after" my grandmother, which means we have the same name. Grandma Isabel moved into our house when I was 2, so that was . . . seven years ago, because I'm 9.

JJ

No you're not. You're 8.

IZZY

I'm practically 9.

JJ

You're 8 and a half.

IZZY

(sighing; to audience) This is my little brother JJ. He's *(pointedly)* barely 5. We also have a little sister named Annie.

JJ

Can I tell my knock-knock joke now?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Knock-knock.

IZZY

Who's there?

JJ

Annie.

IZZY

Annie who?

JJ

Annie-body home?

IZZY

(to audience) So, as I was// saying

JJ

Can I tell another knock-knock joke?

IZZY

Our agreement was one joke.

JJ

No it wasn't.

IZZY

Okay. But only one more joke. These people are in a hurry.

JJ

Knock-knock.

IZZY

Who's there?

JJ

Isabel.

IZZY

Isabel who?

JJ

Isabel broken? I'm ringing it and no one answers. . . . *(to the audience)* Isabel is my grandmother.

IZZY

I already told them that.

JJ

You said Grandma Isabel is *your* Grandma. You didn't say she's *my* Grandma.

IZZY

We have the same Grandma.

JJ

But I'm Grandma favorite.

IZZY

No you're not.

JJ

Am too.

IZZY

Are not.

JJ

She loves me 500 million.

IZZY

(to audience) Pffff. This is what I call *outlandish*, which is a fancy word for making something sound bigger than it really is. *Outlandish* is one of my favorite fancy words. Some of my other favorites are *scallywag*, which is a fancy word for someone who makes trouble *(a glance at JJ)*, and *humdrum*, which is a fancy word for *boring*. I am never *humdrum*. I am always *spectacular*, which is a fancy word for really, really *awesome*.

JJ

If these people are in a hurry, why are you talking so much?

IZZY

(ignoring JJ; to audience) Today I want to tell you about something that happened at our house.

JJ

Our Grandma died.

IZZY

Don't tell them that yet!

JJ

Why?

IZZY

Because we have to tell them how first she got sick. And then she was sick for a long time. And *then* she died. You have to tell it in order.

JJ

Why?

IZZY

Because. *(to audience)* And now we're going on a journey.

JJ

Who?

IZZY

Us. You and me. And these people here. They're going to come with us. *(to the audience)* Raise your hand if you want to come with us on our journey.

JJ

But *why* are we going on a journey?

IZZY

Mom says that when someone dies you always go on a journey. *(to the audience)* A journey is sort of like a trip but it's more . . . *(she tries to think of the word)*

JJ

Exciting?

IZZY

Yes. But also more . . .

JJ

Weird?

IZZY

No! A journey is more . . . *momentous*, which is a fancy word for big and important. That's because when you come back home from a *journey* you're different from when you left.

JJ

Will I be taller?

IZZY

No.

JJ

(*clearly disappointed*) Oh. . . Will I be older?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Hooray!

IZZY

(*to the audience in a stage whisper*) If the journey takes 20 minutes he'll be 20 minutes older.

JJ

What did you just tell them?

IZZY

Nothing. I was "clearing my throat." (*SHE clears her throat*) (*to audience*) Raise your hand if you're ready to go with us on our journey. . . . Okay, here we go!

JJ

Wait!! Wait, wait, wait, wait. I never said *I* want to go on a journey.

IZZY

Don't you want to find the thing at the end of the journey?

JJ

What thing?

IZZY

Mom said that when you go on a journey you always find something magical at the end.

JJ

A treasure?

IZZY

(*Uncertain, bluffing*) . . . Yes!

JJ

A treasure chest full of gold coins?

IZZY

Probably.

JJ

Will I get to wear a pirate hat?

IZZY

Yes.

SHE opens her backpack and takes out two pirate hats and two cardboard insides of paper towel rolls.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Here you go. One hat. And one telescope. I also have a flashlight for later, for exploring secret caves.

JJ

There's going to be a secret cave?

IZZY

Probably. Sometimes treasures are buried in secret caves.

THEY put on their hats.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Let's go!

SHE begins marching, pulling JJ along with her. THEY march and look through their telescopes.

IZZY

We're going on a journey, with a telescope and light
We're going on a journey, but we won't stay overnight
We'll be back before you know it, in 30 minutes — or less!
Because we know that you have things to do, like reading

JJ

And recess!

IZZY

We're going on a journey, and we don't know what's in store

We're going on a journey, to places we'll explore.
And who knows where we'll end up, or whether there'll be bears
Or lions or monsters, so I'm warning you: Beware!

JJ

Did you say *bears*?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

And lions?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

And monsters?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

I want to go home.

IZZY

We can't turn back now!

JJ

Why not?

IZZY

Because we just crossed a bridge.

JJ

We did?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

So let's cross back over the bridge and go home.

IZZY

Heroes never go back before the journey is over.

JJ

We're *heroes*?

IZZY

Yes. We're the heroes of this journey.

JJ

But I don't want to find any bears.

IZZY

I said *maybe* there will be bears. And maybe not.

JJ

Can we sing a song?

IZZY

No.

JJ

I feel braver when I'm singing. We could sing a hero song.

IZZY

No.

JJ

Why not?

IZZY

I already told you: No songs today. Just keep marching.

JJ

Are we superheroes or just plain old heroes?

IZZY

Superheroes.

JJ

Can I wear a superhero cape?

IZZY

Yes.

SHE opens her backpack and pulls out superhero capes for both of them.

IZZY (CONT'D)

And now we're off to find the treasure!

SHE pulls JJ along; they march and look through their telescopes.

JJ

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes?

JJ

Are we looking for Grandma?

IZZY

No.

JJ

But maybe she's in trouble. Maybe a bear is going to get her. Maybe that's why we're superheroes — to save Grandma from a bear.

IZZY

A bear isn't going to get her.

JJ

Because there are no bears here?

IZZY

No, because Grandma died. There was a funeral. Remember?

JJ

Yes, but now we might need to save her from a bear. We might need to find her and save her.

IZZY

We can't save her if she already died.

JJ

Why not?

IZZY

Because.

JJ

Maybe we should call her.

IZZY
We can't call her.

JJ
Why?

IZZY
Grandma can't talk to us anymore. When you're dead you can't talk anymore. You can't do anything.

JJ
Are you sure?

IZZY
Yes.

JJ
But then how will she make me a piñata for my birthday party?

IZZY
She won't.

Suddenly JJ runs away.

IZZY (CONT'D)
Where are you going? The journey is this way.

JJ
I'm going back to when Grandma wasn't dead.

IZZY
We can't do that.

JJ
Yes we can.

IZZY
It doesn't work that way.

JJ
You're a big meanie.

IZZY
Look! Over there!

JJ

Where?

IZZY

Look through your telescope. There's a boat. Hurry!

SHE pulls JJ toward the boat (use whatever you have, perhaps a bench)

IZZY (CONT'D)

We're going on a journey by land and bridge and water.
We're gonna do everything that superheroes oughta.
We're going on a journey to a far and distant shore
So it's good we have a telescope — that turns into an oar!

JJ

Wait!

IZZY

Quick! Get in before the boat floats away.

THEY climb into the boat.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Start paddling!

THEY both begin paddling furiously. And continue paddling during the following.

JJ

Where are we?

IZZY

I don't know. But there's a lot of water.

JJ

Is it a river?

RIVER rushes onto the stage.

RIVER

A rushing river!

RIVER rushes around the stage, and continues to rush around during the following:

JJ

Who are *you*?

RIVER

I just told you.

IZZY

Paddle vigorously! *(to audience)* *Vigorously* is a fancy word for when you do something with lots of energy.

RIVER

(to JJ) Do you know how to swim?

JJ

No. My Grandma was going to teach me but she died.

RIVER

That's sad.

IZZY

Grandma taught *me* how to swim.

JJ

That's not fair.

RIVER

Definitely not fair.

IZZY

(to RIVER) I'm practically 9 and he's only 5.

JJ

I miss Grandma.

JJ begins to cry. HE looks over the side of the boat.

JJ (CONT'D)

My tear just fell into the river.

RIVER

No problemo! My river is *full* of tears — from all the people whose grandmothers have died. That's why I'm such a big, rushing river.

IZZY

Because lots of grandmothers have died.

JJ
How many?

RIVER
Three bazillion.

IZZY
Bazillion is not an actual number.

JJ
Who else's grandmother died?

IZZY
Lucy's.

JJ
That's only *one* grandmother.

IZZY
Also Mom and Dad's grandmothers.

JJ
Mom and Dad had grandmothers?!

RIVER
Everybody has grandmothers. Even the grandmothers had grandmothers. And those grandmothers had grandmothers. And *those* grandmothers had grandmothers. All the way back to the beginning of grandmothers. That's why I'm the longest river in the world.

JJ
Grandma says that the longest river in the world is called The Nile. Which is a river in Egypt.

RIVER
Yes, but, *I'm* really // the longest

JJ
Are we in Egypt now?

IZZY
No, Egypt is in Africa, which is all the way across the ocean. We can't paddle across the ocean in this little boat.

JJ

Grandma told me she wished she could go to Egypt. . . . Maybe that's where she is!
Maybe she's in Egypt! Maybe we should go to Egypt and find her!

IZZY

Grandma is not in Egypt. Grandma died.

JJ

I wish we could paddle to Egypt and Grandma would be there.

JJ cries again.

JJ (CONT'D)

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Why aren't you crying?

IZZY

Some people cry when they're sad and some people don't.

RIVER

Either way is fine. Although of course I like it better when people cry.

JJ

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

I'm tired of being in this boat.

IZZY

Then let's get out!

RIVER

Hey! Wait! Don't leave!

THEY jump out of the boat.

JJ

Yay! We're on land again!

RIVER rushes off to find another sad person.

JJ begins twirling with happiness. IZZY twirls too. THEY twirl and giggle and shout for joy. Like all kids who are grieving, they don't stay sad. And they don't stay happy either. It's a jumble of changing of emotions that sometimes confuses the grown-ups around them.

JJ (CONT'D)

Let's sing a happy song!

IZZY

No.

JJ

But I'm happy that we're on land again! I like to sing when I'm happy.

THEY twirl some more.

JJ (CONT'D)

Why can't we sing?

IZZY

Because.

JJ

Because of Grandma?

IZZY

Stop asking so many questions.

Because they are sometimes happy and sometimes sad, IZZY and JJ are now suddenly sad again. THEY collapse onto the ground.

JJ

I miss Grandma.

IZZY

Me too.

JJ

I feel sad again.

THEY're sad together. Then IZZY jumps up, pulling JJ up too.

IZZY

Come on, we need to find the treasure!

We're going on a journey, so grab your telescope.
We don't know what will happen, although I really hope
It's nothing very icky or sickening or gross
Like a monster who's ugly and smelly and verbose.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Verbose is a fancy word for *talkative*, which is a fancy word for saying more words than you need to.

JJ

Like you?

IZZY

Keep walking.

JJ

Did you say we're going to see a "monster?"

IZZY

I said I hope not.

JJ

Can we sing a song that keeps scary monsters away?

IZZY

Nope.

JJ

Where do you think we are?

IZZY

Just keep walking.

THEY walk some more. Eventually it's clear that they have walked into something sticky and clingy. Mossy. Dark. Lots of twisted vines underneath and overhead. They can hardly lift their feet.

SWAMP creeps up on them and begins pulling at their arms and legs.

JJ

Izzy, what's happening?

IZZY

I don't know.

JJ

I can't lift my feet.

IZZY

There's something sticking to my shoes!

JJ

The vines are twisting around my arms!

THEY try to get rid of SWAMP, but SWAMP keeps tugging at them.

JJ (CONT'D)

I can't get them off!

IZZY

I hate this!

JJ

Where are we?

IZZY

A stupid swamp.

SWAMP

(to the audience) Stupid?! I'm not stupid!

JJ

(to IZZY) This is your fault!

IZZY

No it's not!

JJ

I never wanted to come on this stupid journey. I hate you!

SWAMP

(to IZZY) He hates you!

IZZY

I hate you more!

SWAMP

(to JJ) She hates you more!

JJ

I hate everything!

IZZY

I hate everything more than you hate everything.

SWAMP

(to the audience) They're angry and they hate everything! Yay!

JJ

I want to kick a door!

IZZY

I want to kick two doors!

SWAMP

We need to find them some doors to kick!

JJ

I want to kick a door more than you want to kick a door!

IZZY

No you don't!

JJ

Yes I do! Because Grandma won't be here to make a piñata for my birthday party!

SWAMP

(to the audience) Now they're really mad!

IZZY

Nobody at school knows how much I miss Grandma, and that makes me really angry!

SWAMP

Aauugghh!

JJ

Grandma taught *you* how to ride a bike and she won't teach me because she's dead and dead people can't teach people how to ride a bike and that's not fair!

IZZY

Aauugghh!

SWAMP

Aauugghh!

JJ

Aauugghh!

This is the place of powerful feelings, sometimes feelings with no words, a swamp-like place where their bodies express their anger and hurt. IZZY and JJ thrash and twist, stuck in the stickiness but moving wildly, as SWAMP wrestles them. They fight each other with their cardboard swords. They're angry and they don't know why. This can be almost like a dance. A stomping, angry, stuck-in-the-mud dance. Maybe IZZY pulls a piece of metal and a stick from her backpack and beats on it; JJ holds his ears and then grabs the metal and the stick from her and beats even louder. Finally:

IZZY

STOP!

JJ stops.

IZZY (CONT'D)

We need to get out of here!

SWAMP

No you don't! You need to stay!

JJ

How do we get out of here?

IZZY

I don't know!

JJ

I wish Grandma was here. She'd know what to do.

IZZY

Well she's not!

JJ takes a deep breath and counts to ten on his fingers.

SWAMP

(to the audience, alarmed) What's he doing?

IZZY

What are you doing?

JJ

I'm taking a deep breath and counting to 10. Like Grandma always told us to do when we feel all fussed up.

SWAMP

No! Stop!

SWAMP tries to keep JJ from taking deep breaths but JJ pulls away, takes another deep breath and counts to ten on his fingers.

JJ (CONT'D)

Look!

HE's able to walk more easily now.

SWAMP tries to grab his legs but is unable to.

Now IZZY takes a deep breath and counts to ten. IZZY and JJ breathe and count and walk. Eventually there are fewer and fewer vines and fewer sticky places. THEY have escaped SWAMP, who tries to run after them but can't find them. SWAMP exits, still searching.

JJ (CONT'D)

Do you still have sticky things on you?

IZZY

No.

JJ

Me either!

THEY give each other high fives.

JJ

It was scary in there. Were you scared?

IZZY

No.

JJ

You looked like you were scared.

IZZY

Keep walking.

JJ

My feelings were so *big* in there. It scared me how big they were.

IZZY

A fancy word for big is *humungous*.

JJ

Is it okay to have feelings that are big?

IZZY

Grandma said it is. She said all feelings are okay to have.

JJ

Even if I want to kick a door?

IZZY

Yes. But you shouldn't actually kick a door.

JJ

What if I want to punch someone?

IZZY

Then you should punch a pillow.

JJ

What if I don't have a pillow?

IZZY

Then take a deep breath and count to ten — and when you get home, punch a pillow.

JJ

And can I throw ice cubes on the driveway and smash them into tiny bits?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Let's go home and do that!

IZZY

But we haven't found the treasure yet.

SHE pulls JJ along.

IZZY (CONT'D)

We're going on a journey with a flashlight that we've packed.

We're going on a journey and there is no turning back

Even though there's something dark ahead, something really dreary

And *dreary* is a fancy word for gloomy, bleak and teary.

JJ

I don't want to go someplace like that!

IZZY

Heroes always go to places like that. That's how you know they're heroes. Look through your telescope and see if there's something up ahead that's dark and dreary, gloomy, bleak and teary. . . . Go on.

JJ

(looking through his telescope) I can't tell.

IZZY

Go closer.

JJ

Me?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Why can't *you* go?

IZZY

Because I have to stay here and be in charge.

JJ

In charge of what?

IZZY

Everything. . . . It's a really hard job.

(beat)

IZZY (CONT'D)

Go on.

JJ moves upstage. IZZY continues to face the audience.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Do you see anything?

JJ

Yes.

What is it? IZZY

Just a minute. I have to get closer. JJ

HE inches toward IZZY.

What do you see? IZZY

It's really creepy. JJ

It is? What is it? IZZY

I have to get closer. JJ

Okay. IZZY

It's a . . . JJ

A what? IZZY

(reaching out to touch IZZY) It's an Izzy! JJ

(startled) Help! IZZY

Did I scare you? JJ

JJ! You shouldn't sneak up on people like that. IZZY

(to audience) I scared her! JJ

IZZY

(to audience) No he didn't. I never get scared. *(to JJ)* Go look for the dark and dreary place.

JJ

Only if you'll come with me.

HE pulls IZZY with him. THEY peer through their telescopes and gingerly move upstage.

JJ

Look.

IZZY

What.

JJ

I think it's a cave. Maybe it's the secret cave with the buried treasure.

IZZY

Go inside it.

JJ

You go.

IZZY

(reaching into her backpack and pulling out the flashlight and quickly handing it to him)
You're the one with the flashlight.

HE tries to give the flashlight back.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Be brave, JJ.

JJ hesitates and then crouches and enters the cave. Once inside, he stands up and shines the flashlight around to see what's there.

IZZY (CONT'D)

(still outside) What do you see?

JJ

Come in with me. . . . Please?

IZZY takes a deep breath and enters the cave.

CAVE enters, creeping, on tiptoe.

CAVE

Boo!

JJ

It's dark and creepy in here.

IZZY

And dreary.

JJ

I'm feeling teary. Let's get out of here.

IZZY

Okay. (*SHE starts to exit*) No, wait. The treasure might be here. We have to stay.

CAVE gives the audience a thumbs up.

JJ

I'm scared.

CAVE makes scary, creepy noises, and darts around like a bat, swatting at JJ and IZZY.

JJ shivers. IZZY shivers. THEY sit on a rock (that may look like a bench) and hold hands and shiver together. Finally:

JJ (CONT'D)

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

One time, Grandma told me to stop playing my video game and I called her a Big Meanie. And I did something really, really, really bad.

IZZY

What.

JJ

I stuck my tongue out at her. . . . Is that why she died?

IZZY

No. You can't kill someone by sticking out your tongue at them or calling them names. You can hurt their feelings, but you can't kill them.

Are you sure? JJ

Yes. IZZY

Are you sssure you're sssure? CAVE

CAVE continues to dart around like a bat and make creepy noises and to swat at IZZY and JJ, who cover their heads with their hands.

Izzy? JJ

Yes? IZZY

I'm scared. JJ

(to the audience) He'sss ssscared. CAVE

Izzy? JJ

Yes. IZZY

What's that noise? JJ

I don't know. Cover your ears. IZZY

JJ covers his ears.

CAVE continues to make creepy noises and to swat at JJ and IZZY.

Izzy? JJ

What? IZZY

A beat. JJ can't hear IZZY; SHE pulls his hands off his ears.

IZZY (CONT'D)

What?

JJ

Why do people die?

IZZY

Because.

JJ

Because why?

IZZY

Because they get sick. Or in an accident. Or get really, really, really old. Mom said that everything that lives eventually dies. *Eventually* is a fancy word for *after a long time*.

JJ

Everything dies?

IZZY

Yes. Flowers bloom and are pretty and *eventually* they fade and wilt and die.

CAVE

Flowerssss die.

IZZY

Bugs are born and they live and *eventually* they die.

CAVE

Bugsss die.

IZZY

Animals and plants are born and *eventually* they die — and in between is called “being alive.”

JJ

But will *you* die?

IZZY

Not for a long, long, long time.

JJ

Good.

IZZY

People live a lot, lot, lot longer than flowers or bugs.

(beat)

JJ

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes?

JJ

Sometimes at home I'm afraid of the dark now. Are you afraid of the dark?

IZZY

No.

CAVE laughs uproariously.

JJ

Then why did you ask Mom and Dad to buy you another nightlight when you already had a nightlight? Why do you have two nightlights on at the same time?

CAVE

Yesss, why does Izzzy have two nightlightsss?

IZZY

Because.

JJ

Because why?

IZZY

Because I think nightlights are pretty.

JJ

Oh. *(beat)* But are you sometimes scared?

IZZY

. . . (a small voice) Yes.

CAVE

She'sss ssscared.

(beat)

JJ

Izzy?

IZZY

Yes.

JJ

Will you sing me a don't-be-scared song? Like Grandma used to do?

IZZY

No.

JJ

Please.

IZZY

The rule is "no songs." How many times do I have to tell you?

CAVE

No sssongsss.

JJ

But why?

IZZY

I told you. I don't like singing.

CAVE

Ssshe doessn't like sssinging.

JJ

Yes you do. You used to sing with Grandma all the time. You sang *duets*. Which you said was a fancy word for when two people sing a song together.

IZZY

If I can't sing with Grandma, I'm not going to sing at all.

JJ

But singing makes you happy.

IZZY

Not anymore.

JJ

How do you know, if you won't sing?

Because.	IZZY
	JJ
Just try. Just sing <i>one</i> song.	
	IZZY
No.	
	JJ
Just sing one <i>word</i> .	
	IZZY
No.	
	JJ
Just <i>say</i> a word then. . . . And add a <i>hum</i> .	
	IZZY
That's dumb.	
	CAVE
Ssshe doesssn't want to sssing.	
	JJ
Come on, Izzy. Just say one little word and . . . add a little tune.	
	IZZY
No.	
	JJ
A little tune like a red balloon that lifts and drifts to the top of the room.	
	IZZY
No.	
	CAVE
Ssshe sssays no.	
	JJ
When <i>I</i> sing I feel like Grandma's right here with me.	
	IZZY
Grandma's <i>not</i> here.	

CAVE

Grandma'sss not here.

JJ

But it *feels* like she is. Singing makes me feel like she's here. And that makes me happy.

IZZY

Well it doesn't make *me* happy.

JJ

How do you know if you won't try?

IZZY

...

JJ

Come on, Izzy.

CAVE

Ssshe doesssn't want to sssing!

JJ

(*singing*)

Word, word

Now add a tune

A little hum like a red balloon

That lifts and drifts to the top of the room

And now you're singing!

CAVE

She'sss too afraid to sssing!

JJ (CONT'D)

(*to IZZY*) Try it.

IZZY

...

JJ

(*singing*)

Word, word

A lullaby

A little hum, like a dragonfly

That rhymes and climbs to the top of the sky

And now you're singing!

Now IZZY is smiling, in spite of herself.

JJ

Word, word

IZZY

Word

JJ

Now add a tune

IZZY hums.

JJ

A little hum, like a red balloon

JJ and IZZY

That lifts and drifts to the top of the room
And now you're singing!

Word, word

A lullaby

A little hum, like a dragonfly

That rhymes and climbs to the top of the sky

And now you're singing!

JJ

How do you feel?

IZZY

I feel . . .

CAVE

Ssshe feelsss terrible.

JJ

Do you feel humdrum?

IZZY

No.

JJ

Humungous?

IZZY

Maybe.

CAVE

Ssshe feelsss sssso sssmall and sssad.

JJ

Do you feel happy?

IZZY

(a realization) . . . Yes! Let's get out of this dark and dreary cave!

CAVE

No! Wait! Don't leave!

JJ

Yay!

IZZY

Help me carry this.

*THEY carry the rock out of the cave.
CAVE stomps off.*

IZZY (CONT'D)

Now we need to climb a mountain!

JJ

We do?

IZZY

Yes. Heroes always climb to the top of a mountain.

JJ

But where's the mountain?

MOUNTAIN bounds onto the stage.

MOUNTAIN

At your service!

*MOUNTAIN grabs the bench, which was once a boat and a rock, and motions for
IZZY and JJ to climb aboard. IZZY climbs on first, then pulls JJ up.*

MOUNTAIN

Let's all sing together!

IZZY, JJ and MOUNTAIN

Word, word
Now add a tune
A little hum, like a red balloon
That lifts and drifts to the top of the room
And now you're singing.

IZZY

When I sing, I feel like Grandma's with me!

JJ

I told you so!

IZZY, JJ and MOUNTAIN

Word, word
A lullaby
A little hum, like a dragonfly
That rhymes and climbs to the top of the sky
And now you're singing!

IZZY

She's not here but it feels like she is! Like she's hugging me.

JJ

Like she's a blanket!

MOUNTAIN

Around your shoulders!

IZZY

Let's go home and tell mom we found the treasure.

JJ

We did? Where is it?

MOUNTAIN

Right here.

JJ

But where's the chest full of gold coins?

MOUNTAIN

This treasure is something different.

JJ

What is it?

MOUNTAIN

Four things you learned.

JJ

Four?

MOUNTAIN

One, it's okay to feel sad; two, it's okay to feel angry; three, it's okay to feel scared when your grandma dies.

JJ

That's only three things.

IZZY

Four, you can still feel her love, even when she's not here.

MOUNTAIN

Even when you're singing.

IZZY

Especially when you're singing. And that makes you feel better.

MOUNTAIN

Yes!

MOUNTAIN gives IZZY and JJ a hug.

JJ

Now what?

IZZY

We're going home.

JJ

Good, because I'm hungry!

MOUNTAIN

Goodbye JJ! Goodbye Izzy!

MOUNTAIN skips off, waving to them.

IZZY

(to the audience) We went on a journey with a backpack and a light
 We went on a journey with telescopes — and we might
 Have paddled and climbed and argued and roamed.
 We went on a journey . . . and now we'll go home.

JJ

I'm gonna have a ham sandwich. Or maybe a taco.

IZZY

(to audience) Thank you for being our traveling companions. *Companions* is a fancy word for the kind of friends who come along on a journey and know how to listen when someone is sad.

JJ

And I'm going to have grapes and an apple.

IZZY

(to audience) *Grief* is a fancy word for the feelings you have when you're missing someone who has died. And *relief* is a fancy word for what it feels like to find someone who will listen. Sometimes, listening is the very best thing you can do when someone is sad.

JJ

And I'm going to have celery sticks with peanut butter on them. And raisins on top of the peanut butter.

IZZY

(to the audience) Thank you for coming with us.

JJ

And also maybe I'll have pizza.

IZZY

Farewell, dear companions!

Beat. IZZY pokes JJ.

JJ

Farewell!

IZZY

That's a fancy word for goodbye!

END OF PLAY